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I N F A N C Y.

A

P O E M.

B O O K T H E F I R S T.

By H U G H D O W N M A N, M. D.



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L O N D O N:

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I N T E R I O R

B O O K

T H E F I R S T

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I N F A N C Y.

A

P O E M.

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B O O K THE F I R S T.

**O** DAUGHTER of Divine Philosophy!  
Not Him of Aspect stern, and Brow severe,  
Whose gloomy metaphysic Eye, inwrapt  
In Darkness, never deigns a chearful Smile  
To dissipate the Gloom: But Him who leads  
Instruction by the Graces drest; attend.  
Though barren be the Subject, thou can'st give  
The Bard to please: With me then turn thine Eyes

B

On

one

On the prime Infant-state of helpless Man :

On the first Dawn of Life, when Nature now

10

Ushers her tender Offspring into Day ;

Observe the young Ideas how they wake

In gradual Order, till at length matur'd

By Time, they speak a living Soul within.

View too the transient Flash of Mirth ; the Ills

Not real, yet agonizing ; ye quick Thought

Forever varying, glanc'd from Toy to Toy.

Then constant Motion pleases, then the Ear

Catches at every Sound, the Eye untir'd

Darts its wild Ray, and every Object thrills

20

The new-born Soul with Joy. Come Virgin, teach

How on the Management of these first Years

Depends the future Man ; the Theme not mean,

Not useless, if thy Aid be not refus'd.

WE write to Reason : Hence ye doating Train

Of Midwives, and of Nurses ignorant,

Old Beldames grey, in Error positive,

And stiff in Prejudice, whose fatal Care

Oft Death attends, or a Life worse than Death.

O YOUTH,



O YOUTH, whoe'er thou art, to Beauty's Charms 30  
 A Slave, to th' inexpressive Loveliness  
 Which native Modesty and Truth bestows  
 On their more beauteous Minds, and which exalts  
 Britannia's Daughters o'er the female World!  
 Is thy Belov'd propitious? Doth the God  
 Prepare his nuptial Torch? And dost thou wish  
 The Name of Father, amiable, humane?  
 To view thy little Progeny around  
 Happy, well-form'd, and strong? Attend the Muse:  
 Th' instructive Muse shall teach thee to obtain  
 Thy Heart's Desire. And say wilt thou fair Nymph  
 Not condescend with favourable Eye  
 To read the modest-teaching Page? To thee  
 Custom hath given, while active Life shall call  
 Thy Husband forth amid its boist'rous Walks,  
 Domestic Rule: Thine is among the Rest  
 The Nursery's Charge, the most important Task  
 Of all: What absence from his Eye may hide,  
 Thy constant anxious Care shall well supply.

HEALTH is the greatest Blessing Man receives  
 From bounteous Heaven, by her the smiling Hours  
 Are wing'd with Transport ; she too gives the Soul  
 Of Firmness ; without her the Hand of Toil  
 Would languid sink ; the Eye of Reason fade.

50

To this then bend thy Care, O Parent Mind ;  
 Array thy Child in Health ; a nobler Dress  
 Not gorgeous Majesty can boast ; the Thanks  
 Of future Gratitude thou wilt receive,  
 More than if in his Lap thou then should'st pour,  
 Profusely pour thy Gold ; or give him all  
 Thy Herds, and bleating Flocks, though Thousands range  
 Thy spacious Meads, or cloath thy ample Hills.

60

WOULD'ST thou thy Children bless ? Attend the Call  
 Of beckoning Nature, follow where she leads  
 Unerring Guide : No Labyrinth is here ;  
 No Clue of Ariadne wilt thou need  
 To Theseus given : Fair is her open Path,  
 And strong the steady Light she throws around,  
 Instinctive Light, the surest safest Guide.

TRY



THY Child is born. See, where the treacherous Nurse, 70  
 Or she who o'er Lucina's Rite presides  
 Prepares the poisonous Drench : Forewarn'd, beware :  
 Within the fatal Drug lurks Death ; by this  
 Thousands from yet untasted Life retire,  
 Thousands of infant Souls ; yet, sanctified  
 By Custom, other Causes are assign'd,  
 And Nature is accus'd of impious Deeds  
 She ne'er committed. Nature will preserve  
 Whate'er she frames : Is Physic needful then ?  
 She has remark'd it well, and taught the Child 80  
 To seek its Remedy : e'er yet the Sun  
 Hath from its Birth incircled Half the Sphere,  
 It asks, plain as expressive Signs can ask,  
 The Mother's Breast : Without a Moments pause.  
 Hear the mute Voice of Instinct, and obey.  
 Know the first Efflux from each milky Fount  
 Is Nature's chymic Mixture, which the Attempts  
 Of bungling Art cannot supply, this flows  
 Gently deterfive, purifying, bland ;  
 This each internal Obstacle removes, 90

And

And sets in motion the young Springs of Life.  
 Hence too the Mother is secure: The Streams  
 Health giving to her Infant, flow to her  
 Salubrious; otherwise confin'd, or driven  
 Back on the Blood, what hath she not to fear?  
 The raging Fever, from the fatal Cause  
 Holding its Name, Obstructions fierce, dire Pangs  
 Of Torture, future Cancers by the Juice  
 Of boasted Hemlock not to be remov'd.

O MOTHER, (let me by that tenderest Name  
 Conjure thee) still pursue the Task begun;  
 Nor unless urg'd by strong Necessity,  
 Some fated, some peculiar Circumstance,  
 By which thy Health may suffer, or thy Child  
 Suck in Disease, or that the genial Food  
 Too scanty flows, give to an Alien's Care  
 Thy orphan Babe. O, if by Choice thou dost—  
 What shall I call thee? Woman? No, though fair  
 Thy Face as one of the angelic Choir,  
 Though Sweetness seem pourtray'd in every Line

100

110

And



And Smiles which might become a Hebe, rise  
 At Will, crisping thy rosy Cheeks, though all  
 That's lovely, kind, attractive, elegant,  
 Dwell in thy outward Shape, and catch the Eye  
 Of gazing Rapture, all is but Deceit;  
 The Form of Woman's thine, but not the Heart;  
 Drest in Hypocrisy, and studied Guile  
 This Act detects thee, shews thee to have lost  
 Each tender Feeling, every gentler Grace,  
 And Virtue more humane, more finely drawn  
 And set by yielding Nature in the Breast  
 Of female Softness, to have driven forth these  
 By force, to have unfex'd thy Mind, become  
 The Seat of torpid dull Stupidity,  
 Cold, and insensible to the warm Touch  
 Of generous Emotions, lock'd up close  
 To shut out Pity's Enterance, who retreats  
 Repining from her heaven-destin'd Seat,  
 Usurp'd by Cruelty, the worst of Fiends.

120

HADST thou been treated thus, thou ne'er perhaps  
 Hadst liv'd, so barbarously from thy Sight

130

To fend a Child of thine. O unblown Flower!  
 Soft Bud of Spring! Planted in foreign Soil  
 How wilt thou prosper! Brush'd by other Winds  
 In a new Clime, and fed by other Dews  
 Than suit thy Nature! From a stranger Hand  
 Ah, what can Infancy expect, when she  
 Who bore thee in her Womb so long, whose Life  
 Whose Soul thou didst participate, neglects  
 Herself in thee, and breaks the strongest Seal  
 Which Nature stamp'd in vain upon her Heart.

140

O LUCKLESS Babe, born in an evil Hour,  
 Who shall with watchful Eye thy thousand Wants  
 Attend? Explore with Care the latent Cause  
 Giving Uneasiness? Thy Slumbers guard?  
 And when awake, with nice Sedulity  
 Observe thy every Turn? A Parent might.  
 A venal Hireling cannot if she would:  
 Though willing to perform her Duty well,  
 She feels not in her Soul th' impulsive Goad  
 Of Instinct, all the fond the fearful Thoughts

150

Awakening :



Awakening : Say at length that Habits Power  
 Can something like maternal Kindness give,  
 Yet e'er that Time may the poor Nurseling die.

BESIDES, who can assure the lacteal Springs  
 Pure and untainted ? Oft Disorder lurks  
 Beneath the sanguine Cheek, and chearful Eye  
 Promising Health, and poisonous Juice secrete,  
 Slow undermining Life, stains what should be  
 The purest Nutriment. Hence, worse than Death,  
 A Life of Misery to thy blasted Child.

160

A Burthen to himself, by others shunn'd,  
 He wishes for the Grave, and wastes his Days  
 In solitary Woe ; or haply weds  
 And propagates th' hereditary Plague,  
 Entailing on himself the bitter Curse  
 Of Generations yet unborn, a Race  
 Pithless and weak, who live not half their Days.

BUT, whether lost in Pleasure, in the Round  
 Of modish Life, and Dissipation gay,  
 Misnam'd Polite, the Welfare of her Child

170

The fair Barbarian looks on with an Eye  
 Distant and cold ; or imitating her,  
 (As Faults of higher Station still will gain  
 Followers in humbler Life) in vain the Muse  
 Hath to the Mother's Ear, attun'd her Lay,  
 In the World's midde Rank ; she shall not cease  
 Desponding, stronger Arguments for them,  
 More cogent, more compelling she can bring,  
 To which perhaps self-interested Love  
 Will ope their listening Sense. Of mental Joys  
 To them we speak not. But if Health they prize,  
 Nor wish the Fates to cut their vital Thread  
 E'er they have gain'd their Prime ; Fear may effect  
 What Instinct, Love, and Duty fail'd to do.  
 And here no fabled Lays we bring, to strike  
 With Superstitions dread the Mind, but Truth,  
 Plain honest Truth, inspires the homely Song.

180

SHE who refuses to her young Ones Lip  
 Her swelling Bosom, each returning Year  
 Conceives, and each returning Year sustains

190

The



The Pangs of Child-birth. Harrafs'd by Fatigue  
 The strongest Constitution fails, but soon  
 The weaker System, like a blighted Flower,  
 Falls underneath the Shock. The nursing Time  
 Was meant by wisest Nature, as a Stay,  
 A vacant Interspace, in which the Nerves,  
 And Threads of Life unstrung, might re-assume  
 Their native Tone, endued again with Strength,  
 And corresponding Vigour, to support  
 The Day of Toil: As a sure Medicine,  
 To root out many an Illness, else untam'd,  
 From the soft female Frame: T' invigorate  
 The fragile Texture, and with grateful Force  
 Brace up the Fibres morbid, and relax'd.  
 But if not e'en these Motives can persuade;  
 T' inspire her Charms, new Beauties to acquire,  
 Is Woman's utmost Wish. View then the Fair,  
 Who to this sweet Employment turns her Mind!  
 Delighted Health sits on her polish'd Brow,  
 And shews the Veins beneath: Spreads o'er her Cheeks  
 The vermil Glow; her Eyes with Lustre fills;

200

210

Decks her with radiant Smiles, and all her Form  
With Grace ineffable, and Comeliness

Invests. Enough of these—The Muse beholds

With Rapture some of other Kind—O, hail

Ye real Mothers! Ye whose Hearts are full

Of Sensibility! Who highly pleas'd

Would not for all the Gewgaws Pride can boast

Loosen the magic Knot, which joins in one

220

Your Babes and you; or see a Hireling share

The Love, which to a Mother sole is due.

O Thou, to whom one of this pious Train

I bend with Veneration and Respect!

Let me attend thee, (nor thou fear a Spy)

To thy domestic Haunts, where Peace expands

Her Wings, and Harmony delighted dwells.

Let me behold thee, rivet thy fix'd Eye

On the young infant Form, then press it close,

Close to thy throbbing Heart, then on its Lips

230

A thousand Kisses print, thy Eyes with Joy

O'erflowing, in each Feature tracing out

The fancied Likeness of its much-lov'd Sire.



And lo, where pleas'd, beyond Expression pleas'd,  
 To see thee in the loveliest Task employ'd  
 Of female Duty, where thy Husband hangs  
 Enamour'd o'er thy fostering Breast; the Night  
 Which gave thee to his Arms, gave not a Joy  
 To this superior, piercing to the Soul,  
 Sincere, and home-felt. O true Name of Love,  
 Tender Affection! Genuine Source of Bliss  
 Immaculate, and pure! The transient Blaze  
 Of Lust soon fades; thy unabated Fire  
 Time but increases! Soft coercive Band  
 Connecting Souls! Without thee, what is Life!  
 Sweet Halcyon of the Breast, whose Summer Wing  
 Lulls each tempestuous Care! To thee the Wife,  
 The Good still sacrifice; the Soul refin'd  
 From vulgar Dross; nor any but the Dull,  
 Whom Nature niggard of her Bounty cast  
 In narrow Mould, or whom with Iron Hand  
 Tyrannic Custom rules, despise thy Sway.

240

250

THRICE

THRICE happy she, by Inclination led,  
 By nought with-held, to add this pleasing Link,  
 This heart-endearing Bond, to the sweet Tyes  
 Of married Love ! But should'st thou e'er be doom'd  
 Votarefs of Truth and Virtue, to forego  
 The Impulses by their eternal Hands  
 Implanted ; to forego the honest call  
 Of Duty and Desire ; condemn'd by Ails 260  
 From Causes unforeseen to tear the Pledge  
 From thy fond Bosom ; while thy sickening Heart  
 Bleeds at the Thought, condemn'd to render up  
 Unto another's Care the Babe thy Love,  
 Beyond Expression, doats on : Let my Lays  
 Direct thy Choice for the momentous Task  
 Whom to employ, what Mother to adopt  
 For thy unconscious young One, for from her  
 Not only Nutriment perhaps he takes  
 To Life and Growth subservient, but who knows 270  
 How far the Stamina yet unevolv'd,  
 How far the Soul herself as yet unform'd,  
 For Texture, Vigour, Passions, Intellect,



On this thy Act depend? Far from the Bounds  
 Of the rank City, let some trusty Friend  
 Explore the Straw-built Cott; there, firm of Nerve  
 Her Blood from every groffer Particle  
 By hardy Labour and abstemious Fare  
 Sublim'd; the honest Peasant's Mate shall ope  
 Her hospitable Arms, receive with Joy 280  
 The infant Stranger, and profusely yield  
 Her pure balsamic Nuture to his Lip.  
 But since the keenest Eye may be deceiv'd,  
 And Vice will lurk amid the country Haunts  
 To Innocence devoted, it were meet  
 T' investigate among the Village Tribe  
 Their Neighbour's Mode of Life. Heeds she the Laws  
 Of matron-like Sobriety? No Sot?  
 No tattling Gossip? Or vexatious Scold?  
 Does no Suspicion light upon her Frame? 290  
 To Wedlock true? Feels she a Parent's Love?  
 To her own Offspring tenderly benign?  
 Does she her Husband's constant Heart possess?  
 Nor seeks he foreign Pleasure? Satisfied

In these Inquiries, still 'twere right not thus  
 To terminate thy Search ; survey around  
 Her little Mansion, see if there in spite  
 Of Poverty, the Step of Cleanliness,  
 Attractive Nymph, hath not disdain'd to tread.  
 The Choice of Age neglect not ; from her Cheek  
 Let not the Hand of Time have chac'd away  
 The Bloom of Youth, nor be she green in Years.  
 For torpid, or impair'd by frequent Use,  
 The flexile Vessels which convolv'd in Maze  
 Wrapp'd within Maze, secrete the purer Stream,  
 Their Office will more sparingly perform,  
 Or less nutritious Particles supply.  
 And if thy Nurse be young, the thoughtful Mind  
 Of Prudence, would not to her Charge confide  
 What claims exactest Affiduity  
 And serious Vigilance. There are who think  
 Too subtle in their Theory, the Nurse  
 Should with the Mother aptly coincide  
 In Age and Temperament ; but heeding well  
 The Precepts we have given, thou may'st neglect

300

310

Such



Such trivial Niceness; Health from each extreme  
 Remov'd, is not to Colour of the Hair,  
 Or to Complexion ting'd with red or brown  
 Confin'd: Excess thou should'st indeed avoid  
 Of Plump or Lean, nor would I choose th' adult 320  
 And highly bilious, or the sable Hue  
 Of clouded Melancholy. Be it then  
 Thy chiefest Care to fix on vigorous Health  
 Array'd in Smiles, the lovely Progeny  
 Of constant Chearfulness, and sweet Content.  
 Nor would I (though confest a Quality  
 Inferior in its Kind) not prize the Voice  
 From Harshness free, whose soft Tone can compose  
 The froward Babe, or gently bid it wake,  
 And view the young-eyed Morn. O thou who help'st 330  
 To throng the crouded Town, restrain'd by Force  
 Within that Court of Death, where every Gale  
 Is tainted with Pollution; did the Muse  
 If some sad Cause forbade thee to pursue  
 The Mother's genuine Office, to the Fields  
 Serene, and rural Lares order forth

Thy tender Infant, not from needless Fears  
 And vain Precaution, did she dare to thwart  
 The Dictates of Humanity. She fees,  
 What do not to thy Eye perhaps appear, 340  
 The dreadful Train of Ills, which swarm within  
 Th' unhallow'd Precincts. Well she knows how few  
 Out of the many Myriads city-born  
 Survive, in just Proportion scann'd with those  
 Who bask in freer Day. Much can no doubt  
 A Parent's warm and unabating Love,  
 And hard it is to part. But can'st thou purge  
 Th' unwholesome Atmosphere, gravid with Seeds  
 Of latent Sickness? Suffocation fell,  
 Angina, apthous Sores, Eruptions dire, 350  
 Pertussis fierce, and squalid Atrophy?  
 Say, can'st thou bid the flagging South speed by,  
 Nor over his peculiar Mansion brood  
 With darkening Plume, of Poison and of Death  
 Prolific? When each Danger I review,  
 By Heaven, I scarce would wish thee to attempt  
 The Nurses' Task, though nought should intervene.



Of fatal Accident, and thou art bound

By every Tye of Nature to the Deed.

For can'st thou round thy Infant's Brow entwine

360

A magic Wreath? Or cause an Angel lift

His shielding Arm? Thou can'st not: Follow then

The Precepts of Experience; yet let oft

Maternal Fondness guide thee to the Place

Where rests the little Sojourner, there view

How cherish'd, how improv'd, and lingering chide

The rapid Step of still-progressive Time

Which hurries thee reluctantly away.

BUT can the Mother change unblam'd the Town,

For some sequester'd Villa? What denies,

370

Her Bed of Sickness quitted, to retreat

And seek the Haunts, where Peace on Flowers reclin'd

Lifts to the warbling Songster of the Grove?

Or from the gently-rising Hill surveys

The grazing Herds, and Rivulet which winds

Meand'ring through the distant Vale? Where Health

Sports on the level Green, and young Delight

Smiling attends: Where bounteous Nature sheds

Her choicest Blessings, and with guardian Wing  
 Protects her favourite Progeny. Retire, 380  
 My fair Disciple, haste to Scenes like these,  
 And underneath thy Roof invite to dwell  
 The Fosterer of thy Child. Despise with me  
 The idiot Train of Vanity and Pride,  
 The Foppery of Custom, quaint Parade  
 Of ceremonial Visit, idle Farce  
 Of Masquerade, or Ball where real Joy  
 Ne'er enter'd, Conversations gayly dull  
 Unblest by exil'd Friendship, Glare of Courts,  
 And Mummery of the Great. Be't thine to walk 390  
 With Reason, and enjoy th' harmonious Voice  
 Of conscious Rectitude, whose soothing Strain  
 Can lift the Soul beyond what vulgar Thought  
 Can distantly imagine. If thou must  
 Require another's Aid thy Place to fill,  
 Her Conduct thou direct, and regulate  
 The Manner of her Life, a Pleasure this  
 Inferior, yet affording ample Room  
 To gratify the finer Nerve of Love.



To see thy Substitute at stated Times

400

The life-sustaining Food supply, to mark

How thrives her young Dependent, and each Day

Appears Addition manifest to gain

In Size and Stature, while his Face beams forth

At least to Fancy's peering Eye, the Dawn

Of future Reason, and Intelligence.

HERE, as in all Things, Nature opens wide

Her Page instructive. Did'st thou not behold

How in her homely Dwelling, Health array'd

With roseate Hue the Cheeks, and firmly strung

410

The Muscles of her elder Boy thy Nurse

Hath left behind? She was not surfeited

With dainty Cates, and high luxurious Fare

When him she suckled, never did a Draught

Stronger than Water pass her thirsty Lip,

Pernicious Ale she knew not. When releas'd

From short Confinement, to her Wants no Friend,

No menial Servant ministred, her Babe

She fill'd, then gave up to the soft Embrace

Of

Of Sleep ; mean while no sedentary Life 420  
 She led, she spun the Woof, in Order meet  
 She set her Cott, the Viands she prepar'd  
 With which at Even-tide to welcome Home  
 The Husband whom she lov'd : Or in her Arms  
 Bearing her grateful Burthen, out she hied,  
 Braving the Summer's Heat, or Winter's Cold,  
 And as she walk'd caroll'd th' incondite Lay  
 Of rustic Merriment. Seek not to change  
 Her usual Regimen, for if thou dost  
 Should she escape the Fever which impends, 430  
 Expect thy Child, attack'd by cholic Pangs,  
 To writhe in Torture, or perhaps at once  
 Convulsive Spasms shall snatch him from the World.  
 For now her Stomach, which from Diet hard  
 By Habit's Force, and potent Exercise  
 Elaborated Chyle of blandest Sort,  
 Oppress'd by Crudities, corrupts the Blood  
 With viscid Recrement. Or else the Brain,  
 That Source of Motion, urg'd by Sympathy,  
 Creates new Impulses of morbid Kind 440  
 The vital Threads affecting, and from thence  
The



The salient Arteries, and ruddy Stream  
 Within their Coats contain'd, the Glands from it  
 Their various Store secreting, nor escapes  
 Among the rest the lacteal Tide, the Food,  
 By Nature of thy Child, but now his Bane,

    O HABIT ! Powerful Ruler of Mankind,  
 Great Principle of Action ! Reconcil'd  
 By thee to every Clime, the human Race  
 O'erspread this Globe, around the frozen Pole  
 Scorn the stern Brow of Winter, nor beneath  
 The Equinoctial dread the Ray intense  
 Of scorching Phœbus ; thou presid'st well-pleas'd  
 O'er the innocuous vegetable Meal  
 Which on the Banks of Ganges or of Ind  
 Satiates the temperate Bramin. Thou can'st tame  
 To wholesome Nourishment the sanguine Feast  
 Of th' ever-roving Scythian. To thy Laws  
 We subjugate the willing Neck, profess  
 Thy Vassals ; nor the mental Faculties  
 Dost thou not sway ; by thee inwapt in Maze  
 Of subtle politics the Statesman plans.

450

460

His

His fraudulent Schemes unceasing. Thou sustain'st  
 The Sage who labours for the public Good  
 With patriot Care, though oftentimes assail'd  
 By black Ingratitude. The midnight Lamp  
 Of Meditation, trimm'd by thee, reveals  
 To th' philosophic Eye Truth's awful Face,  
 And all his Toil is Pleasure. Led by thee,  
 The Bard retreats from Vice's noisy Reign,  
 And in the secret Grot with Fancy holds  
 Delicious Converse, while her Hand withdraws  
 The Veil from Memory's ideal Store,  
 And all th' associated Tribe of Thought  
 Displays before his View. Still may I bend  
 Before thy Shrine, O Habit, when thy Rules  
 With Nature's disagree not, neither then  
 May we unpunish'd break them, else in vain  
 Shalt thou attempt to fasten round my Heart,  
 For know, that Reason and her Sister Form,  
 Fair Virtue, can untwist thy magic Cords,  
 And to their Will, though not annihilate,  
 Can all thy Laws attemper and refine.

E N D O F T H E F I R S T B O O K.













